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Sport for peace and development

Letter dated 11 July 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to convey to you the report on the promotion of sport: a key social priority of the Government of Uzbekistan (see annex).

I would highly appreciate it if you could circulate the attached information as a document of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly under agenda item 11.

(*Signed*) Murad **Askarov**
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uzbekistan

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Annex to the letter dated 11 July 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

Promotion of sport: a key social priority of the Government of Uzbekistan

It would be no exaggeration to call today's Uzbekistan a nation of champions. In the years since the country gained its independence, much has been done to promote sport, especially among children and teenagers. As has been noted in *Narodnoe Slovo*, the official newspaper, Uzbekistan's athletes can now take part in the most prestigious international competitions and enjoy all the necessary conditions to become true professionals of their craft, scoring resounding victories on behalf of their country and triumphing at Asian and world championships.

The names of outstanding talented athletes from Uzbekistan have long entered the annals of Uzbek and world sport. These include Rishod Sobirov, the absolute world judo champion in the 60 kg weight class; Vadim Menkov, declared the world's best canoeist by the International Canoe Federation; Artur Taymazov, two-time Olympic free-style wrestling champion; Akgul Amanmuradova, Uzbekistan's top tennis player; Rustam Kasimdzhanov, winner of the 2004 World Chess Federation Championship; the swimmer Sergey Pankov; the gymnast Ulyana Trofimova, who won silver at the Asia Games and bronze at the 2011 Rhythmic Gymnastics World Cup in Kyiv; Odil Ahmedov, the Uzbek midfielder; Elshod Rasulov, the world youth boxing champion; and, of course, the international football referee Ravshan Irmatov, who refereed the semi-final game of the 2010 World Cup of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) and was named its best referee. Uzbekistan's champions and Olympic medallists have carried their country's fame far beyond its borders. The promotion of sport in Uzbekistan is conducted under the patronage of President Islam Karimov. Today, many young men and women dream of emulating our athletes and yearn to become true champions.

Setting priorities

Experts have identified promising and priority Olympic sports for Uzbekistan. The priority sports include judo, freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling, boxing, artistic and rhythmic gymnastics, trampolining, canoeing and kayaking, taekwondo, weightlifting and athletics. These are considered priorities because our athletes have the potential to compete for gold, silver and bronze medals in these sports. Swimming, rowing, shooting, tennis and cycling (track and road) are seen as promising sports, for which athletes could qualify for the Olympic Games and give a worthy performance.

According to Roman Itskov, presidential adviser on Uzbekistan's national Olympic committee, the further support and promotion of sport in Uzbekistan shall be shaped by these requirements and priorities. One of the founding documents in this respect is the Presidential Decree on preparing Uzbekistan athletes for the Games of the XXX Olympiad and the Fourteenth Paralympic Games in 2012 in London, United Kingdom.

The document sets out the programme for the stage-by-stage preparation of Uzbekistan's athletes to participate in these Games. A special focus is placed on improving the selection of talented young athletes from among the members of sports clubs and teams, particularly from the different regions of Uzbekistan, organizing their training to improve their mastery of their sport and setting in place the necessary conditions to create a pool of athletes through the continued development of specialized sports schools and colleges for the preparation of future Olympic athletes. In addition, the programme envisages the provision to national Olympic sports federations of sports centres and facilities, necessary renovations and world-class sports equipment and supplies, and improved access to specialized nutrition and medical services for athletes. Further, the programme has adopted the practice of inviting sponsorship by large businesses and entrepreneurs to support and promote Olympic sports in Uzbekistan.

Origins of our sporting prowess

Experts assert that Uzbekistan's sporting prowess can be traced back to the Government's great focus on the promotion of sport among children and teenagers.

Witness the admiration voiced by Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, President of the World Chess Federation, for the attention paid to children's and young people's sport in Uzbekistan. After all, this means that the country is not only concerned about the future of the next generation but is also making sure that the next generation is one that can think for itself and stand on its own feet.

The promotion of children's sport in particular will guarantee future victories for Uzbekistan's sports establishment and promote its visibility in the international arena. The President also underscored this at a recent meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Youth Sports Development Fund held in the first half of 2011. It was observed at the meeting that sport is becoming the most effective and efficient means of demonstrating the potential of the country and its people and fostering the national sense of pride and honour.

A look at the work of the Youth Sports Development Foundation demonstrates the emphasis that it places on determined and large-scale efforts to promote physical education and sport, and in particular to the continued development of children's sports, the construction of modern sports centres and stadiums in towns and rural communities complete with equipment, expert coaches and mentors. In 2010, as part of the programme for the construction, renovation and repair of children's sports facilities and swimming pools, 95 such facilities were opened, 61 of them located in rural areas. The judicious allocation of funding made it possible to construct four additional children's sports facilities.

That same year marked the first holding, as proposed by President Islam Karimov, of the *Barkamol Avlod* youth sports games in Surxondaryo province. This major youth forum carries enormous social, political and cultural significance in the rearing of a well-rounded and harmonious new generation.

A number of new youth sports facilities were built in Termiz for this event. These include an all-purpose sports hall with a football and track and field arena and seating for 10,000 and the modernized Kurash sports centre, where additional renovations were made.

Furthermore, as part of the programme to promote football, children's and youth divisions of professional football clubs will be opening in 2011 in Andijon,

Namangan and Samarqand provinces. Also in 2011, the Foundation plans to finance the construction, renovation and repair of 149 sports facilities, comprising 130 children's sports centres and 19 swimming pools, of which 118 will be located in rural areas.

Providing sports facilities with the necessary equipment is another top priority. Between 2003 and 2010, a total of UZS 18,910 million was spent by the Foundation on sports equipment and supplies for 1,199 newly built children's sports facilities.

A large-scale effort is currently under way in Uzbekistan to involve girls and boys in regular sports activities. Accordingly, in 2010, the number of schoolchildren aged between 6 and 15 enrolled in some form of sport or physical activity grew to 1.6 million or 34.5 per cent of all such children, as compared with 29.2 per cent in 2008. Participation among girls has grown from 24.1 to 30.9 per cent.

Thanks to the creation of regional gymnastics federations and centres, girls now have more opportunities to get involved in women's sports. Consequently, the number of girls participating in rhythmic gymnastics has tripled over the past two years. In addition, the number of girls who spend their leisure time playing table tennis or swimming continues to grow.

Results and achievements

The promotion of children's sport in Uzbekistan is producing tangible results. For the first time in its history, Uzbekistan's national football team placed among the top four teams at the Asian Cup held in Qatar. The national junior football team won silver at the Asian championships and qualified for the 2011 Under-17 World Cup in Mexico, where they performed brilliantly, winning the group stage to reach the quarter-finals and defeating youth teams from the Czech Republic, the United States of America and Australia. This was a huge achievement for Uzbekistan's junior players. Meanwhile, Uzbekistan's amputee football team has won the world champion title for two years in a row.

Recently, Uzbekistan's rowers brought back an impressive catch from the Asian Cup Rowing Championships held in Singapore. Meanwhile, the victory of Uzbekistan's junior chess players over Viswanathan Anand caused a sensation. It was unfathomable that a 10-year-old schoolboy and a 20-year-old female university student could win against the reigning world chess champion, even in a simultaneous exhibition match. These results, experts note, were a just reward for the tremendous effort that had been made.

By visiting the Nasaf football club during his trip to the Qashqadaryo province, the President not only saw for himself the achievements of the country's social and economic reforms, he was also able to give them his seal of approval. By taking the time to talk to the team's coaches and players, the President demonstrated that supporting and promoting sport was a top priority and it would always be at the centre of attention.

It is noteworthy that FIFA, in response to the surge of interest in football in Uzbekistan, took the historic decision to hold the 2012 world championships for female players under the age of 20 in our country. This has inspired a rush of enthusiasm among sports fans and athletes alike. What new challenges await Uzbekistan's athletes? We will soon see for ourselves the feats of which they are capable.